

Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior*: Dystopian Novel

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Abstract

Barbara Kingsolver's prominent novel Flight Behavior has a timely, precise, and inevitable message about climate change. The main subjects of this essay are biodiversity and the interaction between humans and their surroundings. The need for consciousness and the preservation of the natural world is expressed by flight behavior. This research article uses Dellarobia's family's experiences to evaluate the harmful effects of climate change in depth. This article examines the eco-dystopian themes in Barbara Kingsolver's novel Flight Behavior. The novel's climax is deliberately open-ended, allowing readers to pause and decide their own destiny whether they should confront challenges directly or to give up. Without any doubt, the most critical problem facing humanity in today's world is climate change. Confirmed by scientific data, it is clear that the consequences of humanity whether positive or negative will determine how long it will last. All of the species that call home ought to make a conscious effort to confront the uncomfortable facts of climate change. In order to change the physical reality we live in, it is here that the human race as a whole has to embrace the plain facts of the times and make use of our democratic rights. She advocates a transformation of consciousness that acknowledges and respects the environment. She also has seeded the novel with many descriptions that help the reader understand the complicated progress of the planets warming. Hence the paper reveals the biotic consequence of climate change and the need for respecting and preserving Nature.

Keywords: Climate Change, Sustainable future, dystopian vision, Eco-criticism, Environmental awareness

Introduction:

We are proceeding toward an impossible-to-imagine future. The time to take action on climate change is now, as it is the primary concern of our time. But what? Culture is usually turned to by society to try and make sense of the challenges confronting the world. Climate change compels us to look beyond our own lives and towards future generations, and also about our part in creating that future. It takes resourcefulness to fulfill this duty. Thus, it ought to come as no surprise that a literary movement which seeks to convey the impacts of climate change in straightforward terms has started to gain momentum over the past decade or so. Known by the umbrella term "cli-fi," this literary movement has been accepted as a unique category of science fiction.

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Received date: January 30, 2024

Acceptance Date: April 06, 2024

Publish Date: April 20, 2024

Citation: Surbhi A. Gausvami, Hasmukh Patel. Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour*: Dystopian Novel. International Journal of Architectural Heritage. 2024; 7(1): 1-4p.

Dystopian fiction offers a futuristic vision of a society with an austere portrayal of the present world. Keith M. Booker asserts that a "dystopian fiction tends to have a strong satirical dimension that is designed to warn against the possible consequences of certain tendencies in the real world of the present" (127). In other words, the dystopias possess in itself a "moralistic goal of preventing the horrors they illustrate," and reveals the "basic optimism" (Sisk).

The novel *Flight Behavior* by Barbara Kingsolver has already started to dispel that anxiety. The book is nevertheless a "cautionary

tale" (Uhlenbruch 142) but it also offers hope in a way that many other dystopian books of fiction have not been capable of. As thus, the book offers itself as a possibly critical dystopian tale that, in Lyman Tower's words The author intended for a contemporaneous reader to view the society depicted by Sargent as "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that holds out hope that the dystopia can be overcome and replaced with a utopia" but usually includes at least one utopian enclave. (Bhuvanewari) [1].

The efforts of this new genre to imagine the causes, effects, and feeling of global warming have been supported by the works of many successful literary fiction authors, such as Margaret Atwood, Paolo Bacigalupi, T. C. Boyle, Michael Crichton, Ian McEwan, Amitav Ghosh, Barbara Kingsolver, Ursula Le Guin, Lydia Millet, David Mitchell, Ruth Ozeki, Nathaniel Rich, Kim Stanley Robinson, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Marcel Theroux. The most significant and controversial problem divides the world in the twenty-first century is global warming. The steady rise in the average temperature of Earth's atmosphere, which is believed to be indefinitely altering the planet's climate, is known as "global warming". Scientists ultimately reached the conclusion in 1896 that human activity caused the globe to heat up even more. And yet, here we are in 2020, continuing to debate the existence of human-caused climate change as though it were a novel occurrence.

Dystopian literature portrays a brutal, futuristic society which represents the reality of the world now. As to Keith M. Booker's claim, dystopian literature is characterized by a strong satirical element meant to inform readers about the potential repercussions of particular developments in today's real world (127).

Kingsolver's classic work, *Flight Behavior*, exemplifies her singular approach to converting experiences into revelations—science through fiction. The primary objective of *Flight Behavior* is the environment and how climate change has affected and continues to cause damage and regularly unanticipated changes on Earth. However, the book additionally shows the dispute that arises when people try to make money while protecting the environment. Not all financial gaps can be filled with such simplicity outside of the novel, even though this specific stand of trees is ultimately saved and not cut down. (Ramadan) [7].

The setting for the 2012 novel *Flight Behaviour* is the made-up town of Feathertown, Tennessee, where all of the populations of the monarch butterflies have moved. This species' typical winter habitat in Mexico has flooded because of a series of events brought on by climate change. They alter their normal path and migrated to the incorrect place. However, the entrance of the butterflies produces a breathtaking show. (S) [10]

Arrival of Butterflies is described by Kingsolver as

"Unearthly beauty had appeared to her, a version of glory to stop her in the road. For her alone these orange boughs lifted, these long shadows become a brightness rising. It looked like the inside of joy, if a person could see that. A valley of light, an ethereal wind. It had to mean something. She only wondered how long she could watch the spectacle before turning away. It was a lake of fire, something far more fierce and wondrous than either of those elements alone. The impossible."(21-22) The setting of *Flight Behavior*, a book examining disparities in society and climate change, is rural Appalachia with millions of monarch butterflies. Frustrated mother and wife Dellarobia discovers all of North America's monarchs have descended to her mountain while on her way to meet a man. She feels astonished and shocked by what she sees, and I can't help but feel exactly the same way after looking at pictures online. The scene of monarchs gathering in massive groups amid trees, like grapes, is simply stunning. (Rao) [8].

"The flames now appeared to lift from individual treetops in showers of orange sparks, exploding the way a pine log does in a campfire when it is poked. The sparks spiraled upward in swirls like funnel clouds. Twisters of brightness against grey sky."

From there, Dellarobia discusses to those near to her about her feelings towards the monarch, her marriage, her children, and her dreams. For the sake of wealth, her father-in-law wants to log the mountain. Dellarobia's mother-in-law never seems to be in agreement with it. Cub, her partner, is shy and slow-moving but empathetic. She is first given focus and training by scientist Ovid Bryon, who comes to examine the insect life. However, Byron lives in a world that is very different from her own. (Rosenthal) [9].

A brilliant African-American researcher named Ovid Byron, an entomologist, comes to conduct an inquiry and places the blame on an entirely other agent: climate change. Dellarobia develops a sense of self-confidence that her lack of education and poverty used to deny her as she understands how to help Byron in making sense of the odd apparition on her farm. The story is filled with religious allegory: the monarch butterflies transform the environment through making it seem if "trees have turned to fire, a burning bush".

The central figure in "Flight Behavior" is Ovid Barron. He reaches the Turnbow countr“ like the butterflies, transforming everything. A scientist by learning, he got drawn to the mountains to research monarch butterflies. Ovid opens a dormant awareness in Dellarobia with the support of his scientific aptitude. Ovid leads her out of her gloomy existence and into a cheerful, purposeful one, much like a shepherd does. Despite the fact that it might be almost annoying at times, Ovid wants Dellarobia to live a better life. Like a shepherd, he understands that part of his role is to motivate people to see things differently and to push them forward. (G. Rajadivya) [3]

The Conversation Between Dellarobia and Ovid Reveals the Serious Issue of Whole Climate Change

‘Where we will go from here,’ he repeated – Finally Ovid said, ‘Into a new earth. Different from the one that has always supported them. In the manner to which we have all grown accustomed. This is not a good thing, Dellarobia,’ he added. ‘A whole new earth.’

‘I know’ she said. A world where you could count on nothing you’d ever known or trusted that were no place you wanted to be. In so far as any person could understand that, she believed she did. (325) Kingsolver shows her transcendental concern for the challenges surrounding global warming through the character Ovid. Kingsolver's choice of the name "Ovid" refers to the narrative poem *Metamorphoses* by the Roman poet. The metamorphoses in *Flight Behavior* can be linked to two separate phases. The first one is the migration of monarch butterflies from their native habitat, and the following is Dellarobia's shift to a new abilities. Dellarobia adds that she frequently experiences pain over changing weather patterns as her new self emerges. Upon a trip to the local dollar store for Christmas presents for her kids, the most of which Dellarobia discovers is expensive. She nevertheless gleefully destroys the paper while helping the scientists in establishing a field laboratory. She attempts to keep the the butterflies alive. (G.S.) [4].

Another perspective is religious. The citizens of Feathertown cling to religious values. Their most commonly known reaction to climate change is religious. "The Lord's business" is the weather (261). If the demise of the monarch butterfly is viewed as the loss of an element of God's creation, then this response has an optimistic significance. But nearby residents People who are "blind" have never thought of butterflies to be a part of God's creation. They examine the Monarchs gain commercially from this because it attracts a lot of tourists. As Kingsolver puts out, there's the ecological crisis that mankind is creating for itself which cannot be resolved by religion principles in the present world. (Johns-Putra) [5] Mayer, Sylvia [6].

The major issue of the novel is human’s ignorance of climate change and lack of eco-centric vision. The arrival of the monarch butterflies is a phenomenon that everyone in *Flight Behavior*, from religious extremists to the ratings-conscious media, frames to advance their own interests. The arrival

of the monarch butterflies is regarded by the people of Feather Town as an indication of the resurrection or as the rebirth of the Lord. On the contrary, others consider them irritating. The butterflies are an opportunity for Dellarobia's in-laws, Bear and Hester Turnbow, attract tourists and eco-sightseers so that they can earn money to pay off their debts. The butterflies became really the talk of the town for media executives like Tina Ultner, who utilized them to promote their channel and spread news about its present accomplishment. (Devi) [2].

The late arrival of spring in Flight Behavior concludes in a thaw that engulfs Dellarobia's home in a scene that is reminiscent of the biblical flood and implies divine vengeance. But as the exodus of the last butterflies starts with flood and flame merge in an updated version of the book's opening a sequence, suggesting that profound transformation may lead to rebirth. New habitats are created when socio-cultural and geographical divides are crossed as Dellarobia builds a new life for herself, leaving her unhappy marriage behind and entering university. By then, it is still feasible to think about better, more sustainable possibilities for Earth.

CONCLUSION

Flight Behavior stresses the need to sustain an awareness of the natural world. The novel stresses upon the harmony between human and non-human world and therefore tries to reconstruct the harmony of the earth Flight Behavior promotes consciousness about the need for safeguarding the natural world. Kingsolver merges both scientific and ecological aspects into her novel. Though Kingsolver did not deal with what happened to Dellarobia or her village after the flood, she leaves the ending open to the readers. And with this open closure the author rightly exposes humans' lack of eco-consciousness as a cause for global warming, and urges to find ways to reorganize our lives supportive to the environment we live in.

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